Department of State

TELEGRAM

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PAGE 01 SAIGON 02105 29092IZ

EXCISE

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC

S E C R E T SAIGON 2105

EXDIS

REF: STATE 13769 — Pair + Vets.

1. DURING A TALK WHICH CALHOUN AND I HAD WITH [redacted] JULY 28, I COMMENTED VERY BLUNTLY TO [redacted] ABOUT THE PROBLEMS OFTEN CREATED FOR US BY PRIME MINISTER KY'S EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS TO THE PRESS. I MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY HIS REPORTED COMMENT THAT HE MIGHT RESORT TO A COUP IF "CROOKED AND CORRUPT" METHODS WERE USED TO WIN THE ELECTIONS. I SAID THAT AS I HAD MADE CLEAR TO BOTH KY AND HIM, WE COULD NOT CONTEMPLATE ANY SUCH ACTION AS A COUP AND I WAS SURE THEY UNDERSTOOD THIS POINT CLEARLY. I ADDED THAT REFERENCES TO SUCH POSSIBILITIES IN THE

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PAGE 2 RUMJIR 2105 S E C R E T
PRESS WERE NOT ONLY DAMAGING BUT CREATED REAL PROBLEMS FOR US IN WASHINGTON, AS I WAS SURE [redacted] WOULD APPRECIATE.

2. [redacted] RATHER LAMELY SOUGHT TO EXPLAIN THIS PARTICULAR COMMENT BY KY BY SAYING THAT HE WAS REFERRING ONLY TO USE OF "ILLEGAL" METHODS TO WIN THE ELECTION. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE HAD JUST BEEN TALKING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER ABOUT THE WHOLE QUESTION OF PRESS RELATIONS AND PROBLEMS. HE SAID

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Izenberg DATE 10/7/8
PORTIONS DENIED ALTHOUGH

Saigon 2105 Pair + Vets 1-24-67

DECLASSIFIED

SECRET

PAGE 02 SAIGON 02105 290921Z

KY WAS AWARE OF THIS PROBLEM BUT HAD NO ONE WORKING WITH HIM WHO REALLY KNEW HOW TO HANDLE THE PRESS. HE HOPED THAT IT COULD BE KEPT UNDER CONTROL AND ALSO EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT WE COULD BE OF SOME ASSISTANCE WITH THE FOREIGN PRESS. I REMARKED THAT THE PROBLEM REALLY LAY IN HAVING CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD GUIDELINES FOR THE PRESS WHEN THEY ACCOMPANY KY ON TRIPS OR AT CEREMONIES. I SUGGESTED THAT KY MIGHT SPECIFY WITH ACCOMPANING JOURNALISTS THAT ANY QUOTATIONS FROM HIM MUST BE CLEARED SPECIFICALLY BEFORE FILING.

PAGE 3 RUMJIR 2105 S E C R E T

3. [ ] RETURNED TO THE QUESTION OF WHAT WE SHOULD DO TO KEEP THE AMERICAN PRESS FROM MAKING SOLUTIONS TO SPECIFIC PROBLEMS MORE DIFFICULT. HE CITED GENERAL CHINH OF THE 25TH DIVISION AS AN EXAMPLE, SAYING THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WAS FULLY AWARE OF THE NEED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT HIM BUT THAT SO LONG AS THE AMERICAN PRESS KEPT UP A CAMPAIGN AGAINST HIM IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO ACT. HE SAID THE GVN CAN NOT MOVE ON PROBLEMS OR INDIVIDUALS WHEN IT IS UNDER PUBLIC PRESSURE FROM THE FOREIGN PRESS.

4. COMMENT: I BELIEVE THIS TALK WAS HELPFUL AND THAT [ ] WILL DISCUSS THE MATTER FURTHER WITH KY. I WILL ALSO FOLLOW UP AS APPROPRIATE WITH KY. WITH RESPECT TO [ ], I QUITE AGREE THAT STATEMENTS LIKE THIS CAN BE EXTREMELY DAMAGING, PARTICULARLY IF LEAKED TO THE PRESS. I ASSUME DEPARTMENT [ ] RELIABILITY HAS NOT BEEN ESTABLISHED AND APPRECIATES THAT I CAN HARDLY RAISE SUBSTANCE OF SUCH ALLEGED COMMENTS

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PAGE 4 RUMJIR 2105 S E C R E T
WITH KY SOLELY ON THE BASIS O AN UNCONFIRMED [ ] REPORT. GP-3. BUNKER

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